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ABSTRACT

The New Jersey Council on Adult Education and Literacy was created in response to the literacy crisis. The council reached consensus that learning must be a lifelong process, families were teachers, and the workplace was also an educational arena. It established priorities and recommendations in three areas: family literacy, workplace literacy, and the adult education and literacy delivery system. The council's goal in family literacy was to promote the family as educator and to involve the schools and public in family literacy efforts. The creation of a guide to literacy services was recommended to facilitate the access of families to these programs. The council recommended encouragement of a dramatic increase in the availability of workplace literacy programs in New Jersey. The recommendations focused on how small and medium-sized firms, unions, government, and educational agencies become partners in this effort. The council concluded that the delivery network for adult basic education and literacy programs was inadequate. Recommendations included developing greater cooperation between public and private providers of literacy services, providing increased funding to assist the nonprofit literacy agencies, and better serving special populations. (YLB)

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Adult Literacy in New Jersey

Meeting the Challenge of the 21st Century

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NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

Adult Literacy in New Jersey: Meeting the Challenge of the 21st Century

A Report of the Council on Adult Education and Literacy

Literacy provides an endless source of satisfaction. For instance, a parent who is able to read to his or her child gives that child the love of reading. Students who eagerly read the great works of literature—Herman Melville, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou — better understand themselves and their country. A literate worker is willing to learn new technologies rather than being fearful of them. And yes, for those who lead their lives with the shameful secret that they cannot read at all, the gift of literacy will open a new world of possibilities.

***Lucinda Florio,** Co-Chair*

The family is a child's first and most important educator. When the literacy skills of a family member are improved, the entire family is strengthened. Moreover, the benefits extend far beyond the family to the workplace, the community and society at large.

***Dorothy Strickland,** Co-Chair*

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NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

Executive Summary

There is a literacy crisis facing New Jersey and America. Unlike other crises, like natural disasters or wars, it does not have an immediate impact or visible scars. Yet, over time, the effects of low levels of literacy erode the nation's ability to compete in a world that rewards intellectual achievement. The purpose of this report by the *Council on Adult Education and Literacy* represents the first attempt in more than twenty five years to assess the adult education and literacy system in New Jersey.

Over the past decade, numerous reports have been released alerting Americans that they face a crisis in their educational system. Hardly a day goes by without another dire warning being issued about the quality of the American educational system in comparison to the rest of the industrialized world. This has caused major policy debates about improving the nation's schools. **Unfortunately, equal attention has not been given to the level of literacy of the nation's adult population, most of whom are not in school.** For too many New Jerseyans, the mismatch between their levels of literacy and societal literacy demands is a crucial public question which must be addressed by all those who care about New Jersey's future.

The results of the *National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS)* clearly shows that **a significant percentage of the adult population - nearly fifty percent - is functioning at a level of literacy below what is demanded by a complex society and a global economy.** *New Jersey scored above the national and regional averages for literacy* (See Appendix A). However, extrapolating results from the nation to New Jersey yields distressing findings about the level of literacy of New Jerseyans.[1]

- *1.2 to 1.4 million New Jerseyans scored at the lowest literacy level: they may not be able to locate one piece of information in a sports article, locate an intersection on a map, or total a bank deposit entry.*
- *2.5 to 3 million of the 6 million adults in New Jersey may be unable to use a bus schedule, write a brief letter complaining about a credit card error and calculate miles per gallon.*
- *Nearly half of all New Jersey adults in the lowest literacy level were living in poverty, compared with only 4 to 8 percent of those in the two highest proficiency levels.*
- *Individuals at the lowest literacy levels reported median weekly earnings of about $230 to $245, compared with about $350 for individuals performing on the middle and $620 to $680 for those at the highest level.*
- *Approximately 60% of individuals at the two lowest levels of literacy lack full-time employment.*

[1] *These numbers are estimates of how the national findings apply to New Jersey. This process is justifiable, given the closeness of New Jersey's results to that of the nation and region.*

The low literacy level of America and New Jersey incurs real costs to both individuals and to society. **The annual costs of illiteracy to the United States in terms of welfare expenditures, crime, prison expenses, lost revenues, and industrial and military accidents have been estimated at $225 billion.**[2] Yet, Federal, State, Municipal, and private literacy programs have only been able to reach five percent of the total illiterate population.

To respond to the literacy crisis, Governor Jim Florio signed Executive Order 68 on October 29, 1992 to create the New Jersey *Council on Adult Education and Literacy.* The Council met for the first time on April 20, 1993 with First Lady Lucinda Florio and Dr. Dorothy Strickland of Rutgers as Co-Chairs. The *Council* is an independent, nonpartisan, policy-developing and oversight body.

At the Council's first meeting, Governor Florio formally charged the Council with its mission: **To assure that all New Jerseyans are able to attain the full measure of literacy that their talents permit.** The Governor stressed the importance of literacy to assist parents in educating their children and in enabling workers to obtain high skill and high wage jobs.

The Council's report, **Adult Literacy in New Jersey: Meeting the Challenge of the 21st Century** focuses attention on the literacy needs of adults and the role of education in meeting those needs. This report is an attempt to raise public awareness about the importance of adult education and literacy and to offer recommendations for improving New Jersey's current adult education and literacy system. The Council hopes that this report will stimulate public discussion.

A major conclusion of the report is that too many Americans see education as the exclusive province of the young and believe that learning only takes place in the schools. The Council believes that learning must be a lifelong process, that families are teachers, and that the workplace is also an educational arena. Unfortunately, these views are not widely shared among the public.

The Council, after assessing the state of literacy in New Jersey, established their priorities and recommendations in three areas: Family Literacy, Workplace Literacy and the Adult Education and Literacy Delivery System.

Family Literacy: Family literacy focuses on the general importance of parents and the family environment on the academic achievement of children. The Council's goal is to promote the family as educator and to fully involve the schools and the public in family literacy efforts. Additionally, the creation of a *Guide to Literacy Services* is recommended to facilitate the access of families to these programs. The Family Literacy recommendations are targeted to **all families.**

Workplace Literacy: The idea of the workplace as an educational arena, as well as a place to earn a living, needs to be promoted as a vital link between literacy and employment. The Council's recommendations seek to encourage a dramatic increase in the availability of workplace literacy programs in New Jersey. The recommendations focus on how small and medium-sized firms, unions, government and educational agencies become partners in this effort.

Adult Education and Literacy Delivery System: The Council concluded that the delivery network for adult basic education and literacy programs is inadequate. That network consists of an underfunded patchwork of programs, with few formal ties to one another or with the workforce readiness system. ***The best available figures indicate over $70 million of federal and state literacy funds are allocated through at least six state departments to 35 separate literacy services operated by over 100 distinct local service providers.***

[2] *Congressional Resolution establishing "National Literacy Day 1993."*

Recommendations to improve the Adult Education and Literacy System include developing greater cooperation between public and private providers of literacy services, providing increased funding to assist the non-profit literacy agencies and better serving the special populations including persons with learning disabilities, senior citizens,hearing impairments, and non-English speakers.

This first report of the Council is designed to highlight some of the changes needed to improve the adult education and literacy system in New Jersey. By providing new directions for the current system, the Council's aim is to revitalize the programs and policies of the adult education and literacy system and make them more relevant in the lives of New Jerseyans. This report is the first step in a process of systemic change in how adults are provided basic education and English language training in New Jersey. The Council's findings, along with those of the *NALS* report, makes it clear that improving the level of literacy of the population needs to be a high priority for America and New Jersey.

NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

Part One
Council Overview

Introduction

The 17th century British philosopher Thomas Hobbes defined literacy as the ability to manipulate symbols. Society creates symbolic representations of the world—words, numbers and images — which individuals need to master to reach their full potential or even simply to communicate and survive. In democratic societies this mastery is crucial to the fundamental basis of government — the informed consent of the governed. Such "consent" in the American tradition presumes a knowledge of important public issues with subsequent decisions based on that knowledge. The quality of public discourse exists in proportion to a society's standards of literacy.

The need to master symbols — to be literate — extends beyond public affairs. As society grows more complex, so does its symbols, making mastery immediately more difficult and more important. As this report will demonstrate, workers and parents must become literate in ways undreamed of in the past. The labor market of the nineties and beyond will require the average worker to change jobs five or six times, which will likely demand a high level of literacy and intellectual flexibility. A recent IBM advertisement, for example, shows a worker standing next to a computer, the man noting with irony that although he was afraid of computers, he now runs one.

For parents, the obligation of being teachers to their children in an era when there has been a "knowledge explosion" is a daunting task. Even highly educated parents have to scramble to keep up with changes in the school curriculum that reflect dramatic advances in mathematics, physics and biology, among others. For less literate parents, the challenge of helping their children succeed in school must seem all but impossible and often is reinforced by their own past negative experiences in school. Changes in the family structure have had an impact on the home educational environment. Single parent families, usually headed by a female, often in poverty, face day-to-day survival needs — which take precedence over reading to one's child. Families trapped by poverty too often lack the support and resources to provide a better educational atmosphere at home.

It has been widely recognized that literacy empowers people by enhancing their opportunities for success. The transformation of the economy from one based on "muscle" to one based on "brains" has served to make the attainment of literacy a necessity for the many rather than a luxury for the few. The global economy, with its reliance on sophisticated technologies, new organizations of work and high levels of productivity, has underscored the need for literacy. From the factory floor to the nursery to the voting booth, there has been a revolution of rising literacy expectations. As the report's recommendations indicate, a comprehensive approach to improving literacy is needed to assure all citizens equal access to the "symbols" Thomas Hobbes defined as the essentials of literacy. As society approaches the 21st century, the ability to manipulate symbols — to be literate— is more important than at any time in our history.

New Jersey Background

New Jersey's last sustained look at literacy was in 1966. The *Governor's Task Force on Adult Literacy Opportunities in New Jersey* issued a report to then-Governor Richard Hughes on the scope and dimension of adult illiteracy in New Jersey. It declared that *"New Jersey is confronted with an adult illiteracy problem of massive proportions."* Using 1960 census data on education attainment in the State, the Task Force presented the following statistics for those 16 years of age and older:

- more than 761,000 or 19.4% had less than an eighth grade education;
- 515,000, or 13.1% had less than a seventh grade education;
- 257,000, or 6.5% had less than five years of schooling; and
- 92,000 had no formal schooling at all.

The Task Force noted that while the "burden of illiteracy falls disproportionately on the non-white resident of New Jersey," other segments of the population are affected as well. The report understood that illiteracy is closely correlated to unemployment and underemployment, and concluded that "functional illiteracy and poverty were interlocked". Even more disturbing was the Task Force's description of the perpetuation of illiteracy from generation to generation. One poignant section of the report portrayed the price, in human terms:

*The indirect costs of illiteracy, in terms of human waste, are incalculable. The cost in terms of loss of self respect, dignity as a husband or wife, father or mother, physical and mental illness, urban blight, delinquency, illegitimacy, and human anguish will never be known. Even more tragic is the loss of hope or, **even worse**, never knowing it.*

Federal and State Literacy Initiatives

Over the past several years, there have been some notable changes at the federal and state levels that serve as the policy background for the Council. Some of the key changes in this area are discussed in this section.

National Literacy Act

On July 25, 1991, the Congress of the United States enacted the National Literacy Act (P.L. 102-73) to enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults. The Act encouraged the formation of State Advisory Councils on adult education and literacy and directed them to develop comprehensive policy recommendations for improving the delivery of adult education and workplace literacy programs in the states. The Act provided an important impetus for creating New Jersey's *Council on Adult Education and Literacy*. The Act defined "Literacy" as follows:

An individual's ability to read, write and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential.

The National Literacy Act also established a National Institute of Literacy, State Resource Centers and Workplace Literacy and Even Start programs. The Congress appropriated funds to carry out these projects aimed at achieving the ambitious goal of eliminating illiteracy by the year 2000. The State Resource Centers, Workplace Literacy and Even Start programs are all currently functioning in New Jersey.

Establishment of the SETC

The activities of the *Council on Adult Education and Literacy* are closely coordinated with those of the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC). The SETC is New Jersey's "Human Resource Investment Council" with responsibility for creating a coordinated employment, training and education system for the State. The coordination of the Council and SETC is part of New Jersey's plan to link all programs that affect the preparedness of the workforce. The overarching policies of the SETC can be found in *A Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Readiness System* in which the attainment of literacy is a core value. The SETC has established a parallel coordination mechanism with the State Council on Vocational Education which has responsibility for improving the quality of occupational education programs in New Jersey. Under the comprehensive framework established by the SETC, policies and programs are being undertaken to make lifelong learning more of a possibility for all.

Literacy Enhancement Center

New Jersey's State Literacy Resource Center, known as the Literacy Enhancement Center, is staffed by the State Employment and Training Commission in Trenton and serves as a link to the National Institute of Literacy. Through an agreement with the State Department of Education, a statewide literacy training center has been established in Edison and is known as the Adult Literacy Enhancement Center for Professional Development (ALEC). The Literacy Enhancement Center collaborates with the National Institute to stimulate programmatic coordination and disseminate information.

National Adult Literacy Survey

By the year 2000, every adult in America will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship

National Education Goals Panel

The adoption of this goal by President George Bush and the National Governor's Association in 1990 signaled a renewed interest in the importance of literacy. One year before the adoption of this goal, the National Center for Education Statistics contracted with Educational Testing Service of Princeton to undertake "a nationally representative household sample survey of over 26,000 to assess the literacy skills of the adult population in the United States." This survey, known as the *National Adults Literacy Survey (NALS)*, was released on September 8, 1993 and represents the most thorough and sophisticated analysis of the literacy achievement of Americans. Because of the importance of the *NALS* report for policy makers, the

New Jersey Council decided at its initial meeting to adopt the same definition of literacy for the purposes of its work. That definition is as follows:

Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

The definition emphasizes "information processing skills" rather than simply comprehending text. It is a dynamic concept seeking to focus on what adults actually do with printed and written information. The definition is further refined by *NALS* into "three scales representing three distinct and important aspects of literacy."

- *Prose literacy:* the knowledge and skills required to understand and use information from texts that include editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction.

- *Document literacy:* the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in materials that include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphs.

- *Quantitative literacy:* the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials; for example balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest from a loan advertisement.

Each of these areas of literacy is measured along a scale assigned numbers from 1 to 500 and divided into 5 levels in order of complexity (See Appendix B). The *National Adult Literacy Survey* assesses the literacy level of its sample population and various subpopulations.

The Survey offers strong evidence that the nation faces a major literacy crisis. While scholars and advocates may choose to debate certain features of the report, it is evident that the literacy level achieved by many Americans is not commensurate with the demands of the economy or the society. To the extent that "higher order thinking skills" are and will be increasingly required by the changing labor market, the results of the *NALS* offers little encouraging news. The following are some of the more telling results of the *NALS* drawn from the Prose Literacy Scale:

- Forty to forty- four million of the 191 million adults in this country — demonstrated skills in the lowest level of prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies. Many factors help to explain why so many adults demonstrated English literacy skills in the lowest proficiency level defined. The following describes the characteristics of adults who scored in level one. It should be noted that some adults have more than one of the following characteristics.

    1. Twenty-five percent of the respondents who performed in this level were immigrants who may have been just learning to speak English.

    2. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) had terminated their education before completing high school.

    3. One-third were aged sixty five or older.

    4. Twenty-six percent had physical, mental, or health conditions that kept them from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities.

    5. Nineteen percent of the respondents reported having visual difficulties that affect their ability to read print.

    6. Fifty-three percent are not in the labor force.

- Approximately 50 million adults demonstrated skills in the second lowest literacy level.

- Most of the approximately 90 million adults who performed in Levels 1 and 2 did not necessarily perceive themselves as being at risk.

- Individuals in Levels 1 and 2 were much less likely to respond correctly to the more challenging literacy tasks in the assessment — those requiring higher level reading and problem-solving skills.

Specifically, individuals in these two lowest literacy levels were apt to experience considerable difficulty in performing tasks that required them to integrate or synthesize information from complex or lengthy texts or to perform quantitative tasks that involved two or more sequential operations and in which the individual had to set up the problem.

The Council on Adult Education and Literacy

"Every day, people in New Jersey face the daunting task of earning a living, supporting families and participating in their communities without adequate reading skills. In most cases they will fail or live lives on the edge of survival. They will send their children into the world unprepared to build for their own future. I believe it's our responsibility to make state government the best chance for the working poor to get a hand on the ladder and help themselves. We can't afford to waste one person or leave anyone behind on the road to a better life. Our new Council is a fresh commitment to the people of New Jersey, our most important resource."

Governor Jim Florio

Over a quarter of a century after the issuance of the Hughes Task Force report, Governor Jim Florio signed Executive Order 68 on October 29, 1992 which created the *Council on Adult Education and Literacy* to provide recommendations to improve the level of literacy of New Jerseyans.

The New Jersey Council on Adult Education and Literacy is an independent, bipartisan, policy-developing and oversight body charged with the responsibility to develop New Jersey's literacy enhancement strategy and to advise the Governor and state agencies on issues such as measurable goals for adult education and literacy services, coordination of various literacy programs and the promotion of family literacy and workplace literacy.

The Council consists of forty members including experts from a variety of programs serving a multitude of constituencies; ranging from the illiterate to workers seeking to upgrade their workplace basic skills. Represented on the Council are Cabinet officers from the Departments of Commerce and Economic Development, Community Affairs, Corrections, Education, Higher Education, Human Services, and Labor. The Council is co-chaired by First Lady Lucinda Florio and Rutgers Professor Dorothy Strickland.

At the Council's initial meeting on April 20, 1993, Governor Florio formally charged the Council with its mission: ***To assure that all New Jerseyans are able to attain the full measure of literacy that their talents permit.*** The Governor stressed the importance of literacy to assist parents in educating their children and in enabling workers to obtain high skill and high wage jobs. He also emphasized the relationship between the skills of the workforce and the health of the State's economy.

During its first meeting the Council identified specific areas for its initial focus and created three policy development Work Groups - Family Literacy, Workplace Literacy and The Adult Education and Literacy Delivery System.

- The **Family Literacy Work Group** developed policy recommendations on ways to enhance programs that nurture literacy, including family literacy and mentoring. Council member Dana Berry of the Union City Day Care Center served as facilitator of this Work Group.

- The **Workplace Literacy Work Group** developed recommendations for improving the quality and availability of workplace and classroom literacy programs targeted to workers. Council member John Ryan, Vice-president of Schering-Plough, facilitated this Work Group.

- The **Adult Education and Literacy Delivery Work Group** developed recommendations to improve the delivery of all adult education programs in New Jersey. Council member Sam Convissor, President of Partnership Against Illiteracy, facilitated this Work Group.

As an initial finding, the Council determined that, although the world has changed dramatically since 1966, the problem of illiteracy and low-level literacy remains. This is most distressing because the Council views the issue of literacy as one affecting individuals in all their roles in society: as parents, citizens and workers. The purpose of this report is to convey to the Governor, the Legislature and the public the magnitude of the literacy problem facing New Jersey and to offer a series of remedial recommendations. What follows is an overview of the some of the themes that underlay the specific recommendations of this report.

Literacy as a Societal Value

The Council spent considerable time discussing the declining priority given literacy in modern America. Many believe that television is partly to blame. Yet, it is also true that the electronic media, when properly used, offers an enormous educational opportunity. The Council believes that every effort must be made to encourage people to read, to make mathematics less intimidating and make writing a more commonplace event. There was some frustration on the part of Council members in this area since the temptations of television, video games, arcades and "trash popular literature" are so formidable.

While this Council is clearly interested in the importance of literacy in the labor market and for the educational relationship between parent and child, it is convinced that knowledge must not be judged for its utility alone, but also for the new frontiers it opens to the human spirit. Literacy too often is seen as a means to an end and not worthy of being embraced for its own value.

Poverty, Race and Literacy

The findings of the *National Adult Literacy Survey* profile a society in which African-American and Hispanic literacy levels fall below those of Whites. These data highlight the lack of progress the nation has made on two separate fronts: in raising the literacy level of the population as a whole and equalizing the performance of all Americans, irrespective of race. The *NALS* report points out that while literacy proficiencies vary among subpopulations defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age and educational background, it must also be understood that:

...when one group is said to have lower proficiencies than another, this does not imply that all adults in the first group performed worse than those in the second. Such statements are only intended to highlight general patterns of differences among various groups and therefore do not capture the variability within each group.

The variation among the subpopulations in the *NALS* report, particularly those of African-Americans and Hispanics, may well reflect the education price paid for being poor in America. In fact, the Hughes Task Force report said:

Poverty means limited access to education, produces cultural deprivation, which, in turn, results in less stimulation in the home for children to pursue education, and often in educational apathy. Thus, poverty and its effects become a heritage which children of the poor can rarely avoid.

What is so striking is how little the world has changed since 1966. While some would debate the use of the concept of "cultural deprivation," few probably would dispute that low levels of literacy are transmitted from generation to generation. The persistence of this generational transmittal of educational failure is compounded by the devaluation of the importance of literacy at a time when more demanding levels of literacy are necessary. The powerful correlation of race and poverty (the poverty rate for African-American families is nearly three times that of White families) has placed still another generation of minorities in danger of being marginalized into low skill and low paying jobs for themselves and their children. The persistence of discrimination based on race contributes to this connection between race and poverty. The *NALS* report notes:

- Individuals on the lowest literacy levels reported median weekly earnings of about $230 to $245, compared with about $350 for individuals performing in Level 3 and $620 to $680 for those in Level 5.

- Adults in the lowest level on each of the literacy scales (17 to 19 percent) were far more likely than those in the two highest levels (4 percent) to report receiving food stamps.

- Nearly half (41 to 44 percent) of all adults in the lowest level on each literacy scale were living in poverty, compared with only 4 to 8 percent of those in the two highest proficiency levels.

Changes in Family Structure

In the debates about literacy in particular and education in general, blame is often focused on the "decline of the American Family." Frequently such discussions wax nostalgic about the good old days, symbolized by black and white television images of 1950s sitcoms portraying wise fathers with leather patches on their sport coat and cookie baking mothers doting on their children. By inference, and sometimes explicitly, this leads into a condemnation of the new family structure.

Such discussions rarely solve real problems. Whatever the reality of families of past generations, the modern family is much different and, as such, requires institutions, especially those involved in education, to adapt to them. Therefore, the Council, echoing the recommendations of the *Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Readiness System* and those of the soon to be released Gender Equity Task Force, calls for a holistic system of support services depending on the needs of the people. The Council believes that childcare and transportation must be built into the literacy system as it must be built into the workforce readiness system. The separation of educational programs from social support programs must be overcome if individuals in today's society are to be provided with the services they need.

Crime, Prisons and Literacy

Criminologists have found school failure and low educational level have a high correlation with criminality as well as acting out, aggressive, and violent behavior. In fact, it has been found that school failure has one of the highest correlations with criminal behavior. Over two-thirds of inmates score at the two lowest literacy levels.

Within recent years, increased attention has been focused on inmate literacy programs, not only because of the large number of illiterate inmates, but because of the increased recognition of the immense importance of reading skills. Former Chief Justice Warren Burger called for teaching of reading skills in prisons to combat the "staggering" problem of illiteracy. Although there are some effective literacy and educational programs within New Jersey's correctional institutions, many inmates leave prison unable to read. The inability to read, coupled with a prison record, makes it extremely difficult to obtain meaningful employment. Illiteracy is a significant contributing factor explaining why more than 60% of ex-offenders in New Jersey are re-arrested within three years of release.

It is a fact that 98% of inmates serving time in New Jersey will be returning to our communities. Ensuring that inmates released from prison are reading at an acceptable level will greatly influence how well they will function in the society. In order to address the problem of illiteracy among inmates, literacy must be made a priority within Corrections. A comprehensive literacy network, developed and implemented within Corrections, would greatly improve the reading levels of many inmates. The issue of prisoner literacy will be part of the Council's Spring report.

Marginality of Adult Education

There was much discussion by the Council about the lack of visibility of adult education and literacy programs, which apparently have not been a priority for the nation. Hence, running through Council discussions and the recommendations is the call for more publicity to stimulate public awareness about the significance of literacy for our society. There emerged from both Council deliberations and public hearings a strong consensus that adult education must be part of the core educational policy and strategy for New Jersey. For example, questions were raised as to whether the merging of the Division of Adult Education into a new division with vocational education has hindered the viability of the Department of Education's adult education efforts.

Fragmentation of Services

If a single theme pervaded Council discussions, it has been the issue of *fragmentation in the literacy system.* Programs serving similar populations seem unable to coordinate and collaborate in a way that meets the needs of customers. Indeed, the SETC's *Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Readiness System* stresses this point and is in the process of implementing far-reaching recommendations to alleviate this situation. The Council acknowledged the excellence of many individual programs, but had serious concerns about the coherence of the system itself. All too often an individual seeking help is presented with a bewildering set of choices without anybody's assistance in guiding him or her through this maze.

In the field of adult education literacy, both public and private programs suffer from a lack of coordination. There are no explicit statewide priorities on the commitment of resources. ***The best available figures show $70 million of federal and state literacy funds are allocated through at least 6 state departments which operate 35 separate literacy services through 12 programs.*** (See Appendix C.) Additional literacy programs are offered at the local level using both public and private resources through employers, labor organizations, community-based organizations and municipalities, among others. The policy framework developed by the Council is designed to both establish clear priorities and create coherence in program administration. Recommendations by the Council concerning both the organization and funding of adult education programs will be a major part of its Spring 1994 report.

Private Non-Profit Literacy Providers

Clearly, among the positive changes occurring since the 1966 literacy report was the emergence of volunteer-based non-profit literacy providers. As the issue of illiteracy was highlighted, groups such as Literacy Volunteers of America, Focus on Literacy and Laubach Literacy Action rose. Reflecting the best of American values— volunteering to help one's neighbor —citizens acted as tutors to those in need. Literally thousands of volunteers are enhancing the literacy skills of millions of their neighbors these days.

The Council strongly endorses the efforts of these groups, many of which operate on limited budgets. The Council also applauds the many members of New Jersey's business community who have contributed time and money to this effort. Yet more needs to be done to strengthen the training and support of literacy tutors, provide badly needed resources to support these organizations and more effectively tie them into public training programs.

New Educational Technologies

In a powerful presentation, Professor Irving Louis Horowitz of Rutgers University urged the Council not to miss the educational opportunity provided by "a new technology in which information and ideas come together in a blazing variety of forms and shapes." Cutting edge interactive computer-based technology holds out the promise of creating a *"fusion of literacy and skills"* and, by implication, can be a source of social unity rather than division, the foundation of a common language rather than a divisive one. The opportunities presented by interactive media have yet to be fully grasped. Yet it is apparent this new

technology can be of enormous importance to make "inductive" self-paced education a reality for all those who seek to learn. The field of adult education and literacy must come to embrace these new technologies. There seems to be scant evidence so far that New Jersey or the nation has made a policy priority of applying this new technology to adult education and literacy.

Multi-media technology presents the chance to enhance and democratize the acquisition of knowledge in ways undreamed of before the marriage of the personal computer, CD-ROM, fiber optics and television. The opportunity to turn homes and businesses into educational environments where the computer/television becomes an outlet to the world of knowledge is a breathtaking vision. Distance learning through fiber optic electronic highways or other technological advances will mean workers can learn basic skills, English as a Second Language or sophisticated new technologies at the worksite through individualized curriculum. It means that parents will be able to access their children's schools and teachers to directly participate in the educational process. This revolution in technology does not simply add a new dimension to the educational enterprise, but could fundamentally change it by freeing teachers, parents, students, workers and others to pursue many varied learning and living interests. Technology is not the panacea for all the literacy ills of society — it will not replace the personal relationship between teacher and student — but its potential should be harnessed.

Special Note on Mentoring

"What's needed to arrest the growing trend toward illiteracy is greater citizen involvement. By themselves, government programs cannot succeed. What's needed are people who stand up and become involved. One at a time."

***Walter Anderson,** Editor, Parents Magazine*

One of the most meaningful ways of providing assistance to people is through mentoring — a process that matches individuals with successful role models. Mentoring has always been a part of the human relationships: parent and child, journeyman and apprentice, teacher and student, among others. From the perspective of formulating literacy policy, promoting the importance of literacy mentors is crucial.

Integrating mentorship into the adult education and literacy system is an important element in assuring that services are delivered to those in need. The use of literacy mentors by the private not-for-profit literacy providers has added a vital dimension to their activities. The Council strongly supports the expansion of literacy mentorship efforts and offers specific recommendations at the end of the Family Literacy section of this report.

Toward a Vision of Inclusion

Literacy is not a scarce resource to be enjoyed by some and withheld from others. A literate society is one where reason prevails, where there are common understandings about the meaning of words, the proportion of things to each other and agreement about the value of education. In the America of the 1990s, these ideas are especially important as ethnic, racial and language diversity increases. The unity of a nation is largely a function of the mutual understanding of its citizens.

The changing demographics of New Jersey's population means more people need English as a Second Language. At the present time, demand for ESL programs far outstrips supply. The Council has not yet obtained exact figures for federal, state and local expenditures for ESL, but according to experts in the field the current level of funding is inadequate. As part of its Spring 1994 report the Council will make explicit funding proposals which almost certainly will include a call for increases in the level of ESL funding.

Any discussion of inclusion would be incomplete without reference to older Americans. The *NALS* shows that those in the highest two age cohorts, 55 to 64 and 65 and older, completed fewer years of schooling than all other age cohorts with the exception of 16 to 18-year olds, a majority of whom are still in school. Many older Americans with low levels of literacy find themselves isolated and unable to handle everyday issues like medical forms or taxes. The Council believes that older American need to be included in literacy programs and that those programs should be tailored to their particular needs by offering "life skills" instruction. It should also be noted that many older Americans are highly literate and their energy should be tapped as literacy volunteers.

NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

Part Two
Council Recommendations

While the Council has spent considerable time developing this first report, it must be considered only a first step in the Council's ongoing activities. The issuance of the *NALS* report in early September did not give the Council a full opportunity to analyze the results of the national findings. Complete New Jersey results will not be available for sometime. During Spring 1994, the Council will issue a second report which will address these findings in a new series of recommendations. The recommendations that follow are divided into three parts: Family Literacy, Workplace Literacy and the Adult Education and Literacy Delivery System. A narrative section precedes the specific recommendations.

Family Literacy

"The goal of family literacy programs is to enhance the lives of both parent and child: to improve skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors linked to reading. These programs try to break the cycle of low literacy, a cycle which limits lives. The programs rightly focus on the adult and child as partners, a learning team. Family literacy stresses reading as a social activity to be enjoyed, a cooperative experience."

Ruth S. Nickse, Ph.D.

Family Literacy programs recognize the family unit as the primary source of knowledge, language, values and social relations for young children. The value of active participation by parents in reading activities cannot be emphasized enough. Too many children start school unprepared to meet the challenge of kindergarten. Their exposure to books or printed material is limited. These limitations create and foster insecurities that place them at a disadvantage in the early stages of learning. Some students are unable to overcome these barriers. Parents may feel that it is the school's responsibility to strengthen any weaknesses while the parent monitors the child's progress. However, the Council believes schools cannot replace the nurturing environment of the family. ***Parents who are involved in school have children who are better achievers, have higher cognitive skills, higher achievement test scores, and better attendance.***

"When I was a child my mother and father and my grandparents read to me, and I felt the warmth of their closeness and affection. Even now as I read, I sense those early good feelings that I will always associate with reading."

Fred Rogers *(Television's Mr. Rogers)*

Although many preschoolers lack successful role models in their families and may live in a family of non-readers, parents in such circumstance invariably do want something better and different for their children. What these parents may lack is the ability to be teachers themselves without assistance. Family Literacy programs must be sensitive to the culture and environment of the family, thereby, assisting them in a way that maintains their dignity and sense of self esteem. The learning process in Family Literacy programs is enhanced when families fully participate in creating their own educational agenda.

Even for parents who are low level readers, there are ways of helping their children to learn. Story telling, for instance, is a method that non-readers have used to stimulate an interest in learning. This method has served as an alternative to reading while providing the children in the family with a creative way to learn how stories are developed. Parents can also keep books in the home, take trips to libraries, museums, etc. Active participation in school activities by parents provide children with positive feelings about their role in the classroom. Parents must become aware of how these possibilities will greatly improve the learning environment within the home.

Family Literacy is a holistic, family focused approach to literacy, with a particular emphasis on reading. The first principle of Family Literacy states: *The degree to which adults and children in a common household engage in educational and literacy activities together will influence the child's desire and ability to successfully engage in reading as a process of learning.* From this experience a child will develop a desire to engage in lifelong learning. The value of reading and learning must be communicated from adult to child as a joyous process which leads to self-sufficiency and fulfillment as well as empowerment in everyday life.

Given this knowledge, the value of a family who understands the need to take an active role in the educational process cannot be underestimated. Research of Head Start programs supports the notion that early learning gives the participant an edge in kindergarten when compared to students who do not participate in pre-school education.

Low level literacy is a problem that perpetuates itself across the generations because children whose parents do not read are less likely to become readers themselves. Furthermore, poor school achievement, including dropping out before graduation, are commonplace among children of low-literacy parents. Intergenerational programs create an atmosphere that supports learning and provides time for parents and children to spend together. If the family unit can send the message that education is valuable, responsible academic behavior by their children will more likely follow.

National Center for Family Literacy

The National Center for Family Literacy is a private, non-profit corporation established in July, 1989 and regarded as the leading advocate for Family Literacy programs. Established with a grant from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, the purpose of the Center is to expand the efforts of the nation to break the cycle of low literacy that exists in many families. The National Center targets undereducated parents and their preschool children and emphasizes the problems that threaten America's educational and social advancement and ability to compete in the global economy. Three issues that most concern the Center are the:

1. Low level of literacy skills possessed by a large percentage of our adult population;

2. Growing number of children living in impoverished, disadvantaged homes and failing in school; and

3. Rapid increase in the level of literacy required for employment.

Hence, the growing gap between the level of literacy of the disadvantaged and the demands of the labor market must be addressed by Family Literacy programs.

Council's Perspective

The Council differs with the National Center's view of Family Literacy policy by concluding that *the encouragement and promotion of family literacy must go beyond those families who are perceived as "at risk."* The Council strongly believes that family literacy programs are not required by disadvantaged families alone, but are important for all families.

This broader focus on Family Literacy to which the *Council* ascribes reflects the needs of the whole society. Families, irrespective of income or economic status, can benefit from Family Literacy efforts. The current and projected lifestyle of families contributes to the "not enough time in the day to read" syndrome. The single parent households in both poor and middle income families, struggling to make ends meet, can also overlook the educational growth of their children. So, too, do many working and middle-class two parent families lack the time and energy to tend to the literacy needs of their children. In either case, the overly burdened modern American family often provides a household that is less nurturing, less educationally oriented and more television dependent. This can occur regardless of the level of education of the adults.

The Council recommends targeting scarce public and private resources first to disadvantaged families, while at the same time believing that all families can and will benefit from a renewed commitment to enhance the value of reading and learning. Hence, the importance of Family Literacy is a message that needs to be delivered to every New Jersey family. The following are the necessary elements of a model Family Literacy program.

Characteristics of a Model Program

There are specific program characteristics that are prevalent in most successful programs for Family Literacy. In *First Teachers*, produced by **The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy,** the following elements are cited for inclusion within Family Literacy models:

- **Focus on a specific group** like mothers in prison, Hispanic immigrants, and homebound mothers. It forges stronger ties with the community, and also tends to be able to deal more successfully with the specific social and cultural problems of these groups.

- Stress **community involvement** for it has been discovered that the most successful programs worked closely with the community, had strong roots in the community, and a good deal of support from the residents. An example of this is the "Parents as Partners in Reading" program.

- Stress **support services** for programs which offer services such as childcare for siblings, or free transportation to and from the reading sites, minimizing potential problems for students.

- Offer **low or no cost** programs which generally are funded by a combination of public and private grants, and have minimal operational costs. One program in Brooklyn uses books donated by a publishing company. The tuition is generally paid by scholarship.

- Provide **extensive pre-kindergarten curriculum** so that the majority of these programs have classes designed to put the children of adult learners at an advantage before they even begin school. Programs may continue as tutorials, usually up to the age of ten.

- Offer **extra classes** ranging from basic math and science, to ESL, to GED prep and vocational skills training. The most common class offered is a "parenting skills" class, which teaches the participants about proper nourishment and hygiene. The Kenan program offers parents the chance to work as teacher aides and helpers in local elementary schools. Along with the work experience, this portion of the program provides the parents with a better understanding of the schools their children will attend.

The National Center on Literacy believes that specific components of a model program should include: target populations, program goals, duration and intensity of services, support and encouragement for literacy development. Also included in this model are intervention techniques which consider parental values and expectations, and the improvement of their skills, awareness, self-esteem, attitudes, relationships and interactions.

Although accountability was not included in the national perspective, New Jersey supports the assessment of outcomes for all literacy interventions.

Family Literacy Recommendations

1. *Inform the public about the availability of literacy and mentoring programs in New Jersey, the scope of services, eligibility criteria, cost and location.* A cohesive and comprehensive *Guide to Literacy Services* should be developed so that all persons in need have the opportunity to improve their level of literacy.

    1.1 Conduct a survey of libraries, businesses, schools, colleges community-based organizations, civic organizations, and other service providers to determine where programs for family literacy exist. The Newark Partnership Against Illiteracy's excellent survey should be used as a model for this effort.

1.2 Develop and promote a comprehensive guide to information on Family Literacy and other programs which have a Family Literacy component in New Jersey.

1.3 Distribute the "Guide" to target populations as well as schools, post offices, churches, support groups, community-based organizations, shelters, businesses, libraries, training providers, welfare offices, adult basic education programs and other agencies.

2. *Establish in New Jersey one repository for information related to literacy.* This repository will coordinate and make available information on literacy programs and curriculum to improve the current system. The Adult Literacy Enhancement Center for Professional Development (ALEC) administered by the Department of Education should serve as the central state location for literacy materials.

    2.1 The ALEC will gather and organize available materials to support and promote literacy programs.

    2.2 The ALEC will maintain a data base on literacy programs in the State.

    2.3 The New Jersey Literacy Enhancement Center at the State Employment and Training Commission will coordinate statewide information on literacy, with an emphasis on assuring collaboration between public and private literacy providers.

    2.4 The Literacy Enhancement Center will identify and promote ongoing connections between literacy services throughout New Jersey.

3. *The Council and state government will conduct a statewide public relations campaign to promote Family Literacy with an emphasis on the family as educator.* Information will be distributed to social service offices and agencies. Information will be targeted to families of at-risk children utilizing information tracked by the Department of Health.

    3.1 Develop a comprehensive awareness campaign on Family Literacy. The awareness campaign will make optimum use of promoting designated literacy days and months.

    3.2 Distribute information in the statewide survey of programs through the use of various media outlets.

    3.3 Establish a single telephone *hotline* for statewide information on literacy programs.

    3.4 Develop a publication on Family Literacy, emphasizing the family as educator and information about how to support Family Literacy efforts in New Jersey.

4. *The Department of Education will encourage school districts to include information on Family Literacy and mentoring that demonstrate collaboration and cooperation with community - based organizations.* Special emphasis should be placed on gaining responses from the Special Needs Districts.

    4.1 Provide technical assistance to the school districts as they establish evaluation criteria and guidelines for the promotion and assessment of Family Literacy programs. These programmatic standards will include components drawn from *First Teachers* including: Focusing on a Specific Group, Community Involvement, Support Services, Low or No Cost, Extensive Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum and Extra Classes.

    4.2 Develop strategies for more closely connecting adult learning centers with the K-12 system to encourage and support Family Literacy programs.

    4.3 Establish "Homework Centers" and other innovative programs to engage children and their families in educational activities. School-Based Youth Service programs administered by the Department of Human Services should work closely with local school districts for implementation.

While the Council acknowledges that the issue of mentoring transcends the focus of Family Literacy, recommendations for mentoring are included because of the special interest of the Family Literacy Work Group.

5. *The Council should consider the following recommendations:*

    5.1 Identify easily replicable models for mentorship programs that can be used at the local level.

    5.2 State government should develop a highly visible public relations campaign to promote mentoring.

    5.3 Mechanisms should be developed to assist those who need literacy tutoring in finding a mentor.

Workplace Literacy

"Separating 'Learning to Know' and 'Learning to Do' is dysfunctional. The sharp boundary between academic learning and education for work is an artifact of the industrial age. The assumption that they need to be separated for effective learning does not hold. Knowledge, skills, and their application are inseparable; there is no effective understanding of one without the other two".

***Senta Raizen,** Institute on Education and the Economy*

A major premise of the Council is that America faces a crisis in the level of literacy of the population, especially in the workplace. The goal of the Council is to develop policy recommendations that will improve the level of literacy of working men and women in New Jersey. It is axiomatic that the cost of limited literacy is much higher in the modern global economy than in the past. The high skill and high wage jobs of this economy are increasingly based on "thinking skills." The following points, drawn from the work of the *Institute on Education and the Economy*, demonstrate how increases in productivity and wage rates are associated with enhanced literacy:

- A year of training raises wages an average of 9.5% for younger workers;
- This wage rate endures for several years;
- Trained employees are more productive: productivity gains are about twice wage gains;
- Training accounts for 85% of career earnings gains, while changing jobs accounts for only 15%;
- Trained employees quit jobs less frequently and are less likely to be unemployed; and
- If unemployed, trained workers have shorter spells of unemployment.

The Literate Worker

The high wall that separates academic learning from learning for work represents a serious barrier for America and New Jersey to compete in the global economy. Since 80% of those who will be workers in the year 2000 are in the workforce today, a serious loss of potential productivity will occur unless a major effort is made to upgrade the skills of the workforce. Productivity, wages, job satisfaction and literacy are all bound together. In the same way that the family is an optimal place to teach certain skills, so too, is the workplace an optimal place to teach other skills.

The great virtue of the workplace for teaching basic skills is that these skills can be taught *contextually*. That is, by using familiar materials one can learn to apply mathematical principles, for instance, to help understand phenomena with which the worker is already familiar. Whether in an apprenticeship program or general workplace literacy program, concepts are more easily understood because their "usability" is immediately evident. To the

extent that workplace literacy curricula are closely drawn from the work day demands of workers, it will be more comprehensible and, therefore more effective.

The idea of the workplace as an educational arena, as well as a place to earn a living, is not part of the American understanding of the link between education and jobs. For most Americans education is limited to what takes place in the schools. And while Americans worry about job creation, they do not see, as Ray Marshall and Marc Tucker point out *"... it is possible to have a full employment economy in which virtually everybody is poor..."* They go on to explain that Americans *"...do not believe we face important problems with technical training, advanced skills training, adult literacy, or continuing education, in part because they do not see any important connection between skills and competitiveness."*

It is, therefore, no surprise that teaching basic skills or occupational education skills at the workplace is not a high priority for Americans, especially when compared with our foreign economic competitors.

Current Workplace Literacy System

The Council spent considerable time trying to get a sense of both the extent and quality of workplace literacy programs in New Jersey. The Council was impressed by the real commitment to worker education by the Governor and the Legislature in enacting the Workforce Development Partnership program. This $50 million program stands as a national model for wisely investing in the education of the workforce. As one of the recommendations indicates, the Council has already begun the process of surveying New Jersey firms to assess the extent of their workplace literacy programs. Overall, the Council's assessment of workforce literacy in New Jersey, outlined below, shows weaknesses in the system. The following are some of the major findings of the Council:

- The current workplace literacy delivery system is fragmented — lacking a statewide focus.

- Preliminary assessment indicates a significant demand by employers for workplace literacy programs.

- In New Jersey in 1992, the Job Training Partnership Act, administered through local Private Industry Councils, offered basic skill services to 2,603 individuals and English as a Second Language programs for 868 clients. This is roughly 10% of those served by the JTPA system —a system not specifically designed for literacy training. This is a clear indication of the need for basic literacy training for those seeking employment.

- No statewide assessment of employee literacy needs has been undertaken. Extrapolating from national data, it is safe to assume that many firms face a problem in dealing with a workforce whose level of literacy is inadequate. Indeed, an estimated 51% of JTPA clients, 43% of Employment Service/Unemployment Insurance clients and 32% of young adults have literacy deficiencies.

Workplace Literacy Recommendations

1. *The Council recommends that the seven State departments represented on the Adult Education and Literacy Council work together to develop a framework for literacy policy and decision-making within the* Executive Branch Work Group of the State Employment and Training Commission. The Executive Branch Work Group will insure the coordination of adult education and workplace literacy policy. The Work Group will:

    1.1 Create and implement a strategy for the dissemination of information to business about state and federal workplace education grants.

    1.2 Review each grant issued by the State and federal government and suggest changes to insure that the grants meet the needs of program recipients.

    1.3 Assure that workplace basic skills education is a priority of the soon to be created Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). WIBs, an initiative of SETC, is a decision-making body with the responsibility for insuring the coordination of workforce readiness programs at the sub-state level.

2. *The Executive Branch Work Group, in consultation with the Council, shall be responsible for annually surveying the extent of business involvement in workplace education programs.*

    2.1 Develop a unified approach to publicizing the importance and utility of workplace education programs and the attributes of the best programs.

    2.2 Implement a workplace education project in workplace basic skills education by using the expertise of adult education and literacy providers. This project should target medium and small firms and be replicated throughout the State.

    2.3 Create a series of focus groups consisting of businesses and unions to develop strategies for increasing the number and quality of workplace literacy programs.

3. *Information and support for workplace basic education programs should be implemented through the Business Resource Network.* The Business Resource Network, a coalition of state agencies, has as its primary mission to provide business with easy access to necessary information about available state programs.

4. *The Adult Literacy Enhancement Center for Professional Development should be responsible for holding an annual statewide conference on Workplace Education.* The conference will be a joint private/public sector effort with co-sponsors from interested private sector groups. The goals of this conference shall be to:

    4.1 Bring workplace education providers (both private non-profits and public) and firms together to discuss resources and needs.

    4.2 Disseminate information regarding workplace education grants to New Jersey firms.

    4.3 Discuss problems and potential solutions in implementing workplace education programs.

5. *A best practices clearinghouse for workplace education will be established at the Adult Literacy Enhancement Center for Professional Development (ALEC).* The ALEC will work cooperatively with the Business Resource Network to distribute this information.

    5.1 The clearinghouse will maintain an updated library of all information related to workplace education programs which will be accessible through the New Jersey State library system. It will also provide information on the different software/technology used by workplace education providers.

    5.2 Model programs and "Best Practices" in workplace literacy should also be made available to interested employers and unions.

    5.3 Workplace literacy programs are already functioning in New Jersey in selected worksites. The experience of these programs, especially their use of front line workers and employers as volunteers, should be disseminated.

    5.4 Model workplace literacy programs should be tailored to meet standards of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report.

6. *The training of workplace education specialists should be addressed by new collegiate programs.* Courses in this area should be integrated into teacher education undergraduate and graduate curricula.

7. Workplace education should be seen as intrinsic to the mission of the workforce readiness system. Educational institutions need to establish ways of working with firms, especially small businesses, interested in establishing workplace education programs. To pursue this mission, collaboration among community colleges, vocational high schools, adult learning centers, four-year colleges and the non-profit literacy community is encouraged.

Adult Education and Literacy Delivery System

A major focus of the Council is to assess how well literacy services are being delivered to those in need. The Council's purpose is to create a state-based and locally-delivered adult education and literacy system which enables government, business, education and labor to provide New Jersey with a literate population. A literate populate will prove more capable of being good citizens and parents as well as being able to meet the human resource demands of today's global competition. In this context, the Council seeks to strengthen the adult education and literacy service delivery system by:

- *Simplifying State government adult education and literacy program responsibilities.*

- *Improving the quality of local adult education and literacy program delivery systems through, among other policies, their inclusion as a Workforce Investment Board priority.*

- *Enhancing public awareness of the importance of literacy to the lives of individuals.*

Framework

The framework the Council has adopted as the basis for its recommendations is drawn from the State Employment and Training Commission's *Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Readiness System.* That framework, adapted for the purposes of the Council, contains the following principles.

- **A successful literacy system must be consumer-based and market-driven and, therefore, relevant to the needs of the client.** That is, institutions, agencies and private programs involved in literacy and adult education must meet the needs of clients, as workers, parents and citizens. It is the need of the client, not the agency, which is of greatest importance .

- The purpose of the literacy delivery system is to enhance our citizens' ability to comprehend the complexity of the world they inhabit. While certain other outcomes may well result—for example improved self-esteem for clients—**the true measures of success of literacy programs is the extent they improve the level of literacy of the client, including the ability to function more effectively in the everyday world.** Literacy programs must be measured by their outcomes on behalf of the client.

- **Attainment of fundamental literacy and basic skills lies at the heart of the workforce readiness system.**

- **The changes in the demography of the workforce necessitate changes in the way we educate people.** Groups such as single parents, minorities, persons with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged, non-native English speakers, senior citizens and women re-entering the workforce must have programs that meet their needs. All segments of the system must learn to benefit from New Jersey's growing cultural diversity.

Recommendations for the Adult Education and Delivery System

The following are the recommendations of the Council for improving the delivery of adult education and literacy services. These recommendations are not listed in priority order.

1. *Assess the way literacy programs are organized at the State level with an eye toward restructuring them consistent with the producer and consumer model.* The SETC has established an organizational model in which programs should be administered by producer departments — Labor, Education and Higher Education—in order to insure the greatest coherence in the delivery of program services.

2. *Develop a joint strategy to foster greater cooperation between public and private providers of literacy services.* Public and private literacy providers too often exist as separate systems. Using a "one stop shopping model" or some variation on that theme, a strategy should be developed to combine the best of both systems for the good of the client. Programs such as the Family Development Program, JTPA and others should be encouraged to take advantage of the literacy programs provided by the volunteer sector.

3. *Provide funding to assist the private not-for-profit literacy agencies.* Voluntary literacy providers need funds to supplement their program costs. Volunteer associations are not "free" and need adequate resources to perform their vital tasks. The use of public monies should be expanded to support the activities of volunteer literacy providers.

4. *Improve advertising the availability of literacy funding.* The New Jersey Register should be made the official document for logging all funding sources for literacy programs. All literacy providers would be informed of funding opportunities in a timely manner. This will broaden communication about potential funding to assure that all agencies are given an equal opportunity to obtaining such funding.

5. *Investigate the possibility of creating a less restrictive funding system to simplify the adult education and literacy program administration.* The federal government should be strongly urged to merge literacy and adult education programs serving similar populations. The Executive Branch Work Group will attempt to simplify funding which will greatly contribute to the ease of program administration and reduce fragmentation in the delivery system.

6. *Create a state system for literacy information and technical assistance.* Information about literacy programs and "best practice" models needs to be made more accessible. The Literacy Enhancement Center's Academy should take the lead in this area. Ultimately, the system should be computerized through the state library system. This recommendation parallels one offered in the Family Literacy section of this report.

7. *Coordinate with the Governor's Council on Volunteerism and Community Service to improve the use of literacy volunteers and mentors.* The newly created Governor's Council on Volunteerism and Community Service is working on problems similar to those of the Literacy Council. The coordination of policies with this group would prove useful to encourage literacy mentorship programs.

8. *Utilize new technology to improve the entire adult education and literacy system.* The ability to effectively communicate is greatly enhanced by the use of advanced forms of technology, such as fiber optics. This technology when combined with multi-media curriculum opens up unlimited possibilities for the way programs interact with each other as well as the way people learn. The Literacy Enhancement Academy and the Department of Education's Office of Technology should take the lead in this effort.

9. *Establish literacy as an important priority of the soon to be created Workforce Investment Boards.* A major initiative of the SETC is to create local workforce readiness decision-making bodies at the sub-state level. These entities will have the responsibility of insuring that workforce readiness services are delivered in a seamless manner at the service delivery level.

10. *Develop a model to better serve the special populations involved in adult literacy programs including persons with learning disabilities, hearing impairments, and non-English speakers.* Private and public literacy providers need a coordinated service delivery model for special needs individuals, estimated to be about 40 percent of their total clients. Program providers too often lack the expertise to serve special populations. These special problems affect the clients' ability to benefit from literacy programs.

11. *Exploration of the establishment of a special incentive or mini-grant program to support the development of better quality materials for the adult learner.* Research and evaluation of the efficacy of these materials will be part of the requirements to obtain the funds. There is a dearth of materials and technology on the market. Providers should be informed as to which materials work more effectively with groups of adult learners, based on models obtained through control and experimental groups. The Literacy Enhancement Center's Academy should take the lead in this effort. Because of a large increase in the number of people who want to take ESL, the Council needs to explore the possibility of developing training programs for volunteer instructors.

12. *The New Jersey Department of Education should be encouraged to advise local Boards of Education to work closely with Adult Education Centers so programs can be more closely integrated with K-12.*

Conclusion

This first report of the Council is designed to highlight some of the changes that need to be made to improve the adult education and literacy system in New Jersey. By providing a new direction for the current system, the Council's aim is to revitalize the programs and policies of the adult education and literacy system by making them more relevant to the lives of New Jerseyans. What is certain is that the whole question of adult literacy has not received the attention it deserves. This report, along with the *NALS* findings, should make it clear that improving the level of literacy of the population needs to be a high priority for all those concerned with the future of New Jersey.

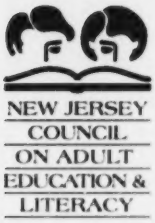
The statistics about literacy bear testament to the powerful relationship between literacy and achievement. Low-level literacy is strongly associated with welfare dependency, unemployment and under-employment, the prison population and poverty. Whatever other social factors affect peoples' lives, it is an unassailable fact that low levels of literacy lead to a bleak future. That the "bleak future" of one generation is transferrable to the next generation, should make society rethink the way it chooses to educate children and their parents.

The changing demographics of New Jersey's population means more people need English as a Second Language (ESL). At the present time, demand for ESL programs far exceeds supply. The Council has not yet obtained exact figures for federal, state and local expenditures for ESL, but according to experts in the field the current level of funding is inadequate. As part of its Spring 1994 report the Council will make explicit funding recommendations which will undoubtedly include a call for increases in the level of ESL funding.

The attainment of full literacy was once thought to be the preserve of the few, of a privileged aristocracy. Mass education represents the democratic impulse to create a nation of literate citizens, capable not only of governing themselves, but of reaching their full potential as parents and workers. A nation that fails to accomplish this important purpose will soon find itself diminished in incalculable ways.

Next Steps

- The Council will work with the executive branch of New Jersey State Government to assure the implementation of recommendations after acceptance by the Governor.
- A thorough analysis of the policy and programmatic implications of the *NALS* report will be undertaken.
- The Council will analyze the deployment of adult education and literacy programs with the idea of increasing their effectiveness and efficiency through regionalization.
- The Council will thoroughly review the funding of adult education and literacy programs and offer recommendations for possible changes, including increasing available literacy resources, especially in the area of ESL programming, in its Spring report.
- The Council will work with the SETC's Work Group on Persons with Disabilities to explore policies targeting the unmet basic educational needs of adult persons with disabilities. That Work Group's recently issued report, *Opportunity for All*, will be used as the point of departure for this collaboration.
- As part of its funding review, the Council will study the characteristics of participants to better understand the utilization of adult education and literacy programs. Included in this analysis will be the determination of standards for measuring the performance of programs and participants.
- The Council will recommend changes in the organization of State Government literacy efforts in its Spring report.
- A series of recommendations on prisoner literacy will be developed.
- The Council will review the implications for workplace education programs due to the changing demographics of the workforce, e.g. fewer White males; more women, minorities and immigrants.
- The Council will review the basic infrastructure of adult education including teacher preparation, professional development and the role of full-time instructional staff.

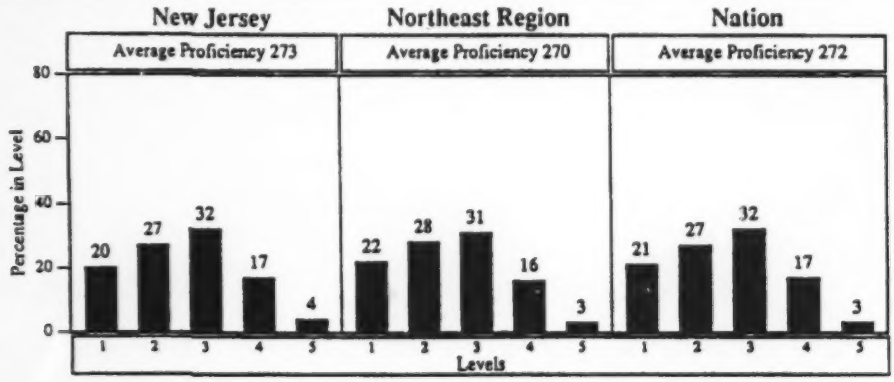


Appendix A

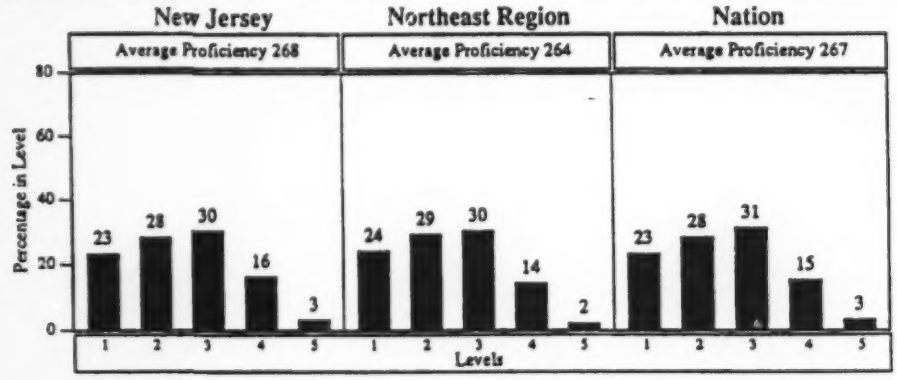
New Jersey Adult Literacy Survey, 1992

Average Literacy Proficiencies & National Comparisions

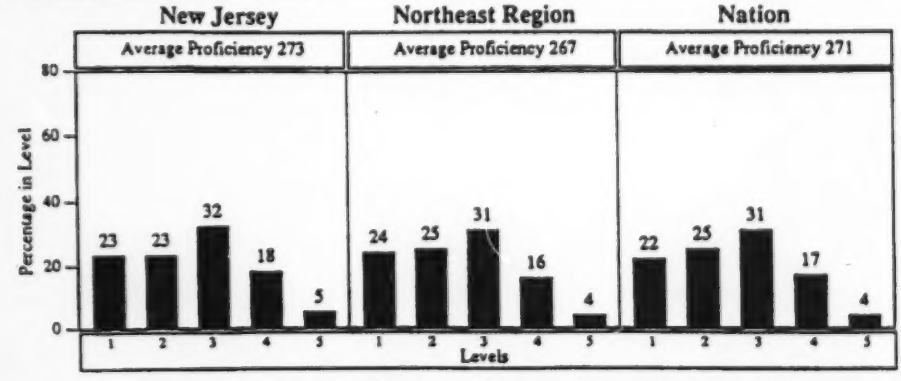
PROSE



DOCUMENT



QUANTITATIVE



Level 1 (0 to 225) Level 2 (226 to 275) Level 3 (276 to 325) Level 4 (326 to 375) Level 5 (376 to 500)

Source: Educational Testing Service, State Adult Literacy survey, & the U.S. Department of Education, National Center of Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992

NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

Appendix B

Description of the, Document,Prose & Quantitative Literacy Level

	Prose	Document	Quantitative
Level 1	Most of the tasks in this level require the reader to read relatively short text to locate a single piece of information which is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the question or directive. If plausible but incorrect information is present in the text, it tends not to be located near the correct information.	Tasks in this level tend to require the reader either to locate a piece of information based on a literal match or to enter information from personal knowledge onto a document. Little, if any, distracting information is present.	Tasks in this level require readers to perform single, relatively simple arithmetic operations, such as addition. The numbers to be used are provided and the arithmetic operation to be performed is specified.
Level 2	Some tasks in this level require readers to locate a single piece of information in the text; however, several distractors or plausible but incorrect pieces of information may be present, or low-level inferences may be required. Other tasks require the reader to integrate two or more pieces of information or to compare and contrast easily identifiable information based on a criterion provided in the question or directive.	Tasks in this level are more varied than those in Level 1. Some require the readers to match a single piece of information; however, several distractors may be present, or the match may require low-level inferences. Tasks in this level may also ask the reader to cycle through information in a document or to integrate information from various parts of a document.	Tasks in this level typically require readers to perform a single operation using numbers that are either stated in the task or easily located in the material. The operation to be performed may be stated in the question or easily determined from the format of the material (for example, an order form).
Level 3	Tasks in this level tend to require readers to make literal or synonymous matches between the text and information given in the task, or to make matches that require low-level inferences. Other tasks ask readers to integrate information from dense or lengthy text that contains no organizational aids such as headings. Readers may also be asked to generate a response based on information that can be easily identified in the text. Distracting information is present, but is not located near the correct information.	Some tasks in this level require the reader to integrate multiple pieces of information from one or more documents. Others ask readers to cycle through rather complex tables or graphs which contain information that is irrelevant or inappropriate to the task.	In tasks in this level, two or more numbers are typically needed to solve the problem, and these must be found in the material. The operation(s) needed can be determined from the arithmetic relation terms used in the question or directive.
Level 4	These tasks require readers to perform multiple-feature matches and to integrate or synthesize information from complex or lengthy passages. More complex inferences are needed to perform successfully. Conditional information is frequently present in tasks at this level and must be taken into consideration by the reader.	Tasks in this level, like those at the previous levels, ask readers to perform multiple-feature matches, cycle through documents, and integrate information; however, they require a greater degree of inferencing. Many of these tasks require readers to provide numerous responses but do not designate how many responses are needed. Conditional information is also present in the document tasks at this level and must be taken into account by the reader.	These tasks tend to require readers to perform two or more sequential operations or a single operation in which the quantities are found in different types of displays, or the operations must be inferred from semantic information given or drawn from prior knowledge.
Level 5	Some tasks in this level require the reader to search for information in dense text which contains a number of plausible distractors. Others ask readers to make high-level inferences or use specialized background knowledge. Some tasks ask readers to contrast complex information.	Tasks in this level require the reader to search through complex displays that contain multiple distractors, to make high-level text-based inferences, and to use specialized knowledge.	These tasks require readers to perform multiple operations sequentially. They must disembed the features of the problem from text or rely on background knowledge to determine the quantities or operations needed.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

Difficulty Values of Selected Tasks Along the Prose, Document, & Quantitative Literacy Scales

Prose		Document		Quantitative	
149	Identify country in short article	69	Sign your name	191	Total a bank deposit entry
210	Locate one piece of information in sports article	170	Locate expiration date on driver's license		
224	Underline sentence explaining action stated in short article	189	Locate time of meeting on a form		
		214	Using pie graph, locate type of vehicle having specific sales		
226	Underline meaning of a term given in government brochure on supplemental security income	230	Locate intersection on a street map	238	Calculate postage and fees for certified mail
250	Locate two features of information in sports article	246	Locate eligibility from table of employee benefits	246	Determine difference in price between tickets for two shows
275	Interpret instructions from an appliance warranty	259	Identify and enter background information on application for social security card	270	Calculate total costs of purchase from an order form
288	Write a brief letter explaining error made on a credit card bill	277	Identify information from bar graph depicting source of energy and year	278	Using calculator, calculate difference between regular and sale price from an advertisement
304	Read a news article and identify a sentence that provides interpretation of a situation	298	Use sign out sheet to respond to call about resident	308	Using calculator, determine the discount from an oil bill if paid within 10 days
316	Read lengthy article to identify two behaviors that meet a stated condition	314	Use bus schedule to determine appropriate bus for given set of conditions	321	Calculate miles per gallon using information given on mileage record chart
		323	Enter information given into an automobile maintenance record form	325	Plan travel arrangements for meeting using flight schedule
328	State in writing an argument made in lengthy newspaper article	342	Identify the correct percentage meeting specified conditions from a table of such information	331	Determine correct change using information in a menu
347	Explain difference between two types of employee benefits	352	Use bus schedule to determine appropriate bus for given set of conditions	350	Using information stated in news article, calculate amount of money that should go to raising a child
359	Contrast views expressed in two editorials on technologies available to make fuel-efficient cars	352	Use table of information to determine pattern in oil exports across years	368	Using eligibility pamphlet, calculate the yearly amount a couple would receive for basic supplemental security income
362	Generate unfamiliar theme from short poems				
374	Compare two metaphors used in poem				
382	Compare approaches stated in narrative on growing up	378	Use information in table to complete a graph including labeling axes	382	Determine shipping and total costs on an order form for items in a catalog
410	Summarize two ways lawyers may challenge prospective jurors	387	Use table comparing credit cards. Identify the two categories used and write two differences between them	405	Using information in news article, calculate difference in times for completing a race
423	Interpret a brief phrase from a lengthy news article	395	Using a table depicting information about parental involvement in school survey to write a paragraph summarizing extent to which parents and teachers agree	421	Using calculator, determine the total cost of carpet to cover a room

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

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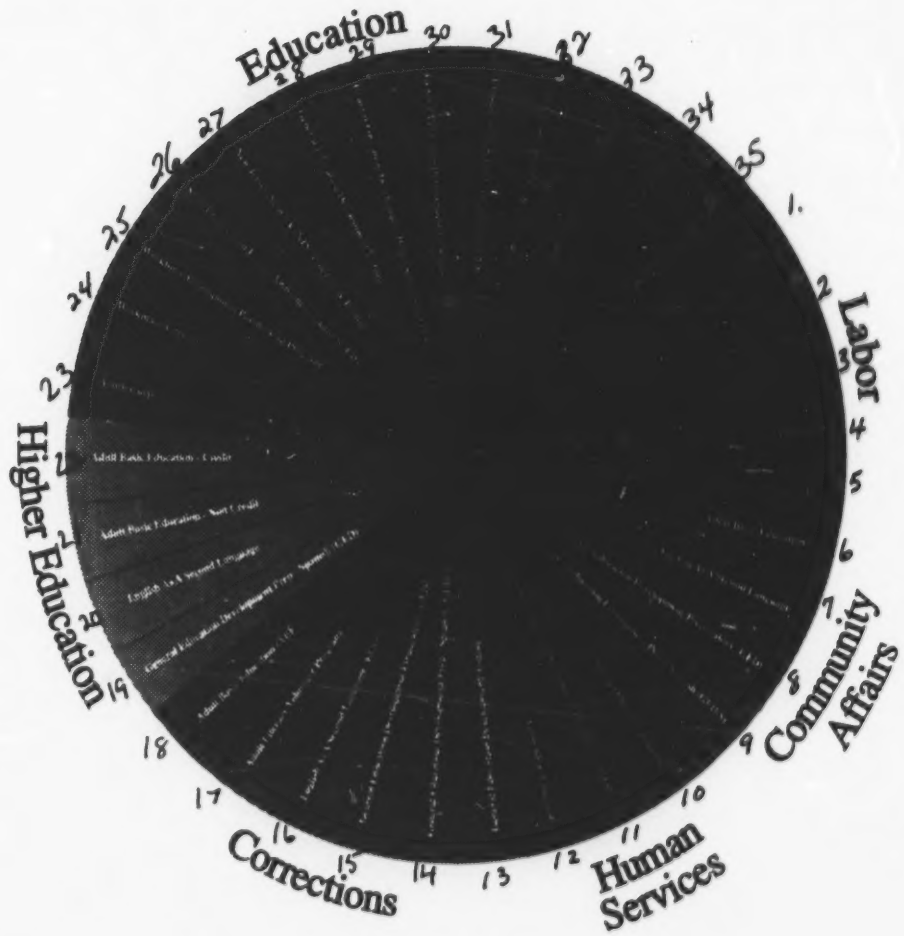
Appendix C

Adult Literacy Preparation Services in New Jersey, 1993



Adult literacy services are also delivered by private providers as Literacy Volunteers of America, Laubach Literacy Action, Private Businesses and many others.

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Key to the illustration ***Adult Literacy Preparation Services in New Jersey, 1993***

Labor

1. Basic Skills Academic Remediation/GED
2. English as a Second Language
3. Summer Youth Employment
4. Workforce Development Partnership–Individual
5. Workforce Development Partnership–Customized

Community Affairs

6. Adult Basic Education
7. English as a Second Language
8. General Education Development Preparatory (GED)
9. General Education Development Prep–Spanish (GED–S)

Human Services

10. REACH Pre-Job Training
11. General Education Development Preparation (GED)
12. Adult Basic Education

Corrections

13. General Education Development Testing
14. General Education Development Prep–Spanish (GED–S)
15. General Education Development Preparatory (GED)
16. English as a Second Language
17. Adult Literacy Volunteer Program
18. Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Higher Education

19. General Education Development Prep–Spanish (GED–S)
20. English as a Second Language
21. Adult Basic Education–Non Credit
22. Adult Basic Education–Credit

Education

23. Youth Corps
24. Workplace Literacy
25. Workforce Development Partnership Program
26. State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants (SLIAG)
27. New Jersey Network (NJN) Program & Hotline
28. General Education Development–Testing
29. General Education Development Prep–Spanish (GED–S)
30. General Education Development Preparatory (GED)
31. Evening Schools for Foreign Born (ESFB)
32. English as a Second Language
33. Adult Literacy Volunteer Program
34. Adult High School
35. Adult Basic Education (ABE)

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New Jersey's Adult Education and Literacy Network, 1993

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NEW JERSEY
COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

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